Blues Intergovernmental Council (BIC) Meeting Summary
River House on the Deschutes Convention Center, Bend, OR
November 22, 2019
11 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Attending: Bill Harvey (Baker County Commissioner), Bill Lind (NOAA), Bruce Eddy (ODFW), Calla Hagle (Paiute Tribes), Carl Scheeler (CTUIR), Chuck Oliver (USFS), Craig Trulock (USFS), Eric Watrud (USFS), Gina Owens (USFS), Greg Wolf (AOC, County Solutions), Jay Gibbs (NRCS), Jim Hamsher (Grant County Commissioner), John Huffman (USDA, Rural Development), Julia Riber (USFS), Lisa Northrop (USFS), Marisa Meyers (USFWS), Mark Owens (Harney County Commissioner), Patti Adair (Deschutes County), Patty Dorroh (Harney County Commissioner), Paul Anderes (Union County Commissioner), Peter Daugherty (ODF), Phil Henderson (Deschutes County Commissioner), Sam Palmer (Grant County Commissioner), Steve Pozzanghera (WDFW), Susan Roberts (Wallowa County Commissioner), Todd Nash (Wallowa County Commissioner), Tony DeBone (Deschutes County Commissioner), Tony Svejcar (Consultant, Eastern Oregon Counties), Travis Medema (ODF)
On the phone: Tucker Billman (Greg Walden’s Office)

Facilitator: Laurel Singer (National Policy Consensus Center) with support from Eileen McLellan (Community Solutions of Deschutes County)

Welcome, Overview and Introductions
Susan Roberts, Lisa Northrop, and Mark Owens welcomed the group, describing this as an initial meeting of potential participants of the Blues Intergovernmental Council (BIC) to begin to get to know each other and to explore the possibilities that could emerge from working together on issues related to the Blues National Forest. Participants introduced themselves, their agency and role.

How We Got Here, Why this Group, and Why Now
Lisa, Susan and Mark kicked off discussion about how the idea for the BIC evolved. Lisa explained that it’s been 15 years since the process began to revise the Forest Plans for the 3 national forests of the Umatilla, Malheur, and Wallowa-Whitman, and much has changed in this time. The USFS withdrew the decision for the revision last year in the face of objections that the Washington D.C office described as indicators that USFS needs to build better relationships and work more in local communities. Subsequent to the withdraw, USFS hosted five listening sessions in five days. The County Commissioners felt these sessions provided an opportunity to have their concerns heard and reinforced the need for the Counties and USFS to be better able to talk to each other. To that end, USFS leadership and representatives of the Eastern Oregon Counties have been meeting monthly over the last 8 months. The concept of the Blues Intergovernmental Council emerged as an outcome of those conversations. The BIC represents an opportunity to pilot for the nation an innovative, government-to-government approach for creating a new, implementable, and sustainable forest planning effort in the next 12-18 months. The initial focus for the BIC will be on the Blue Mountain forests and we hope that it will become an on-going structure for healthy forest management.

In group discussion, the following themes emerged about opportunities offered by the BIC:
• **An interdisciplinary team qualified to work through the difficult issues.** BIC members could help see the process through from beginning to end. This consistent participation is critical to the success of the plan since historical knowledge can be lost when leadership changes.

• **BIC is comprised of policy makers with deep constituent knowledge such as those from the tribes, who have knowledge of the needs of those they represent.** Members can bring the perspectives of those they represent and can communicate back to them as the process continues.

• **A structure for working through issues.** Overall, the group has more in common than it does differences. However, the group will have to work through the details, issue by issue, to reach agreement in the key areas where there is not consensus. The BIC offers the opportunity for honest, transparent discussion to more fully understanding each other’s needs to assure a sustainable forest plan.

• **Opportunity for building relationship and trust.** There has historically been a lack of trust between the agencies and governments at the federal and local levels and work needs to be done to build trust. The BIC could help build understanding and trust critical to implementing a successful plan and an on-going governance structure.

• **Holistic approach to information.** The BIC could draw on both local knowledge as well as current science, offering a broader and balanced approach to development of a new forest plan. The BIC can also allow more information on socio-economic impacts to be considered in the plan.

• **Engagement of private land owners.** Future success on public lands may be advanced through collaboration with private land owners whose property is adjacent to federal lands.

• **Efficiency and sustainability.** Having everyone working side by side in the planning process can allow moving forward more efficiently by avoiding surprises at the end that disrupt acceptance of the plan.

• **Framework for future forest management.** As entities work together, the BIC could possibility serve as a mechanism for on-going forest management and health.

• **Zones of general agreement can allow variation in application to specific areas.** The forests are comprised of many unique areas that may need to be considered individually.

• **Hope.** Working in a new way offers the possibility of doing things in a new way and provides a sense of hope.

• **Not a substitute for other requirements.** The BIC would not substitute or replace existing NEPA process requirements or Tribal Government to Government agreements.

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**Round Table Lunch Discussion**

Participants got to know more about each other and the expertise/resources within the group during a lunch time round table discussion focused on the following questions.

1) **What brought you to the work you do and what keeps you going (i.e. what motivates you of where do you find your highest or satisfaction in this work?)**

2) **What are the strength/areas of expertise that you would bring to this group?**

3) **What are the strength/resources of your organization that could help further the work of this group?**
In debriefing, some of the take-aways from the discussion included that overall, members have a shared interest and vision of sound land management. The group is able to agree on the importance of preventing catastrophic fire and flood management but considering the needs of animals, fish and human interests will require considerable and careful planning.

**What We Could Accomplish Together: Full Group Discussion**

In an open discussion of what the group could accomplish together, questions emerged about the group structure, the roles of the agencies, how the group sees working together, and what would it produce.

A draft charter has been developed during the USFS and Eastern Oregon Counties monthly dialogue sessions that offers information about some of these questions. However, it was emphasized that this charter was intended as a starting draft for review and revision by the full BIC once it is formed. This charter will be sent out prior to the next meeting for discussion. Lisa explained that while the USFS has the legal responsibility to develop the forest plan, BIC’s role would be to make recommendations to the USFS for the 3 national forests management including what has worked in the past.

The group identified some of its key tasks as:
1) Framing the process
2) Creating side-boards
3) Developing common goals/zones of agreements
4) Working through complex planning issues (such as riparian, grazing, elk security, timber, NEPA)
5) Making recommendations that are general and place specific
6) Engaging in a process that will build trust and understanding

The group also envisioned that non-governmental entities would be engaged through subcommittees. Currently, a website where meeting agendas, summaries, and other materials will be posted and open to the public is in development.

**Next Steps:**

**Engage others who need to be at the table.**

- Carl, USFS Forest Supervisor, and a Commissioner will work together to reach out to Tribal leaders of the Warm Springs and Nez Perce tribes, to encourage participation
- Patty Adair will hand deliver an invitation letter to the Warm Springs Tribal leadership.
- Peter Daugherty will connect with Jason Minor in the Oregon Governor’s office to explore thoughts about engaging leadership from DEQ, Oregon Water Resources (including a representative of the 100-year water vision effort), or other natural resources leadership.
- The Farm Service Agency (FSA) was offered by John H. as another possible member.

**Build up the Steering Committee:**
Carl Scheeler, Peter Daugherty, Paul Anderes, Tony Svejcar, and Travis Medema stepped forward to join Mark Owens, Susan Roberts, Lisa Northrop, Glenn Cassamassa, Julia Riber, and Greg Wolf on the Steering Committee to work with the facilitator to plan meetings.

Arrange the next meeting:
- Carl Scheeler stepped forward to find a location for the next meeting in Pendleton.
- Laurel will send out a “save the date” immediately.
- Laurel will send out the draft operating charter along with the meeting summary.
- All will send Laurel corrected emails to any BIC participant contacts as needed.

Next and Future Meetings
- The next meeting is Friday, December 20, 2019 11am-3pm.
- Future meetings will be on the last Tuesday of every month at a location to be determined.

Meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.